

**Community Preservation Act Committee (CPAC)**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, November 21, 2013**

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 pm by Peter Jessop, Chair, in the Community Room at the Amherst police station.

**Committee Members in Attendance:** Sandra Anderson, Marilyn Blaustein, Paris Boice, Peter Jessop, Jim Oldham, and Mary Streeter. Also Jim Brissette (arriving at 7:30 pm)

**Committee members Absent:** Ellen Kosmer, Diana Stein (SB liaison)

**Staff in attendance:** Sonia Aldrich, Comptroller, and CPAC Staff Liaison; Dave Ziomek, Assistant Town Manager and Conservation and Planning Director

**Agenda**

- Review Financial Status and available CPA budget for FY2015
- Grant agreement status updates
  - Review draft letter to send to organizations reminding them to give CPAC an update
- Update on Town Meeting
- Discuss our process for studying community preservation "needs, possibilities and resources" of Amherst
- Technology review and update (adding information to the website)
- Set agenda for next meeting
- Approve any minutes
- Topics the Chair did not reasonably anticipate 48 hours before the meeting

The Chair opened the meeting by recording his dissatisfaction with the Select Board and/or the Historical Commission for their failure to appoint someone to represent the Historical Commission on the CPA committee.

Dave Ziomek explained that the Historical Commission is aware of the need to recommend someone for this position but that so far no one on Commission has volunteered to take that role.

1) Review of financial status. Sonia Aldrich reported that available funds are significantly higher than what was reported at the time of the last CPA committee meeting a couple of reasons:

- State match for FY 2013 came in higher than expected, at 52%, providing \$222,339 when approximately \$110,000 was projected. This was due to the addition of \$25M to CPA funds statewide from the state's budget surplus. There is no guarantee it will happen again
- \$11,468 earmarked for projects for Jones Library were not needed and have been returned to the general CPA account. (See letter and report from Jones Library Director)

The above provide adjustments provide a FY14 estimated EoY balance of \$183,093.

The current estimated FY15 surcharge is \$400K with the state match calculated at \$120K (30%) per DOR recommendation.

The total of the above amounts, less \$181,886 required for debt service, leave \$509,738 estimated available funds for CPA FY15.

## 2) Grant agreement status updates.

Mary Streeter reported that she and Dave Ziomek met in June and discussed CPA Committee's need for status reports on projects to prevent backlogs and to get appropriated but unused money returned to the CPA pool, and also to see studies funded with CPA money.

Dave Ziomek noted that one thing he and Mary observed was that some other communities do a better job publicizing outcomes of CPA projects. This is something we could do better. One example where we did do this was with the Hawthorne house, where there was a lot of interest and the architects' study was posted on the town webpage. While cautioning that staff time is limited, as is Mary's volunteer time, he agrees that more historical and other studies could be made available to the general public on the web page, along with results of other CPA funded work, such as the preservation of Emily Dickinson's dress. Mary said she'd be happy to post the studies on the web if Town staff sends them to her.

Mary Streeter shared a draft for an annual letter requesting updates from recipients of CPA funding on the status of their projects. The committee discussed details of the form and offered suggestions that will be incorporated into the next draft of the letter.

Paris Boice suggested that it might be a good idea to request representatives come to a meeting to report in person.

Marilyn Blaustein asked whether seeking this level of detail might be too much micro-managing. She asked for clarifications about what happens with funds. Sonia Aldrich and Dave Ziomek clarified that the money isn't dispersed until invoices are submitted to Town Hall.

Dave Ziomek notes that 70-80% of the problems with outstanding projects involve historic preservation, that can be divided in three categories: projects that fall under the Historic Commission, projects farmed out to Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, and third party projects including Jones Library, NACF, Historical Society, and others.

Dave proposed that he and Sonia Aldrich can provide a report at the committee's December meeting summarizing the status of all projects and identifying funds that may be returned to the CPA fund. The committee agreed to add this to the agenda for the December meeting and to use that report to then identify which projects need to be sent a letter requesting further information.

## 3) Update on Town Meeting rejection of proposal for Saul property acquisition.

Mary Streeter reported that there were lots questions in Town Meeting. People didn't feel it was compelling to do the project out of sequence. Jim Oldham noted that he spoke against the article

because he felt the proposal should be looked at alongside other spending options in the spring, particularly those addressing housing needs. Marilyn Blaustein added that it was hard to understand the urgency for acting in the fall. Peter Jessop observed that this was only the third CPA recommendation that has ever been rejected by Town Meeting. Paris Boice noted that lack of visible support from groups like Grow Food Amherst at Town Meeting was part of the reason the proposal was voted down. Mary Streeter commented that another factor there was no indication how some of the property development anticipated in the proposal would be funded.

Dave Ziomek observed that this was the first CPA open space project in the history of Amherst to be defeated. He saw this defeat in the context of concern about affordable housing, and felt that that was the biggest concern of Town Meeting members given the limited pot of money for FY14. He acknowledged that there were a lot of outstanding questions, and said that they will be answered when the Conservation Commission brings the proposal back for consideration in the spring. We should also know at that point about a state matching grant.

#### 4) Process for studying community preservation "needs, possibilities and resources"

Peter Jessop explained that we have a public hearing scheduled for February 20 to hear comments on current proposals, but we haven't discussed outreach or how we want to frame that meeting.

Jim Oldham called attention to the language in the Community Preservation Act that assigns the CPA Committee with the responsibility of studying the needs and possibilities and resources of the community regarding community preservation through consultation with committees and holding one or more public hearings. He suggested that this is different from soliciting proposals and then seeking public input on those proposals, and indicates the need to get public input at the front end of the process to guide us in setting broad spending goals prior to considering specific proposals.

Sandra Anderson said this is a good point. Typically we only hear from people with proposals, not a broader public. The idea of getting input at the start of the process is similar to what Planning Board's zoning sub-committee does prior to preparing specific zoning articles that will address pieces of a broader vision. Thinks idea is good one.

Mary Streeter referenced the Northampton CPA website which presents a final 2012-2014 plan along with information explaining that their CPC makes a biannual plan that "serves as a reference to needs and possibilities and resources for community preservation and a guide for review of proposals." She suggested that we appoint a sub-committee to look at how other communities manage this public input process to help us develop our own process.

Marilyn Blaustein said her only hesitation is that people seem to think they know what they are talking about but often they don't. They may have priorities that aren't realistic because they don't understand the costs involved.

Paris Boice asked how we would use the public input we might get regarding how the funds should be used if the proposals we get don't necessarily match that input.

Peter Jessop said in a case where proposals received didn't appear to address the identified needs of the community, we could recommend the minimum required expenditures and then reserve the remaining funds for future proposals that do address those needs.

Marilyn Blaustein observed that at times in the past when there have been a limited number of proposals, we have funded projects that wouldn't have been funded in a more competitive situation. She suggested that in such situations it might be more appropriate to hold back some money for future proposals meeting higher priority needs.

The committee agreed to appoint a sub-committee to research how other communities approach this and to develop a proposal for us. The Chair asked for volunteers. Paris Boice and Jim Oldham volunteered and were appointed.

#### 5) Technology review and update.

The Chair opened this topic by thanking Mary Streeter for all her work on the CPA website and inviting her to report on its current status.

Mary says she does this volunteering because she wants to promote transparency in government. She showed the committee the webpage, which has information about committee members, CPA law, links to the CPA Coalition, and to a variety of documents. There are also links to CPA proposals organized by year, and on each of those pages additional information can be found for each project, including images, original proposals, and additional files.

It was noted that the IT department provides very strong and helpful support for this work.

#### 6) Next meeting agenda:

Financial review

Letter to fund recipients

Staff report on status of past proposals

Subcommittee (Boice and Oldham) report on identifying CP needs, possibilities, and resources

Initial review of funding requests

#### 7) Minutes to approve

Minutes from the May 29, 2013 meeting were presented.

Jim Oldham moved to approve, Paris Boice seconded. 5 approve (Jessop, Blaustein, Streeter, Boice, Oldham.), 0 oppose, 2 abstain (Brissette and Anderson)

Minutes of Sept 26, 2013 meeting were presented

Mary Streeter moved to approve, Marilyn Blaustein seconded,

Paris Boice noted the need to amend two locations where Jim Oldham's name is missing.

Vote to approve as amended. 5 Yes ((Jessop, Blaustein, Streeter, Boice, Brissette) 0 oppose, 2 abstain (Oldham & Anderson)

Sandra Anderson moved to adjourn, Mary Streeter seconded, vote is unanimous.

**Meeting adjourned at 8:38 pm**

**NEXT MEETINGS:**

(All future meetings will be held in the Community Room at the Police Department at 7pm. )

December 19, 2013

January 9, 2014

January 23, 2014

February 6, 2014

February 20, 2014 (Public hearing)

March 6, 2014

**DOCUMENTS DISTRIBUTED**

- Financial status for CPA funds
- Draft letter to send to organizations reminding them to give CPAC an update
- Nov 21 Letter from Jones Library Director Sharon Shary together with status report on CPA projects of the Jones Library
- Draft meeting minutes 29 May 2013
- Draft meeting minutes 26 Sept 2013

Submitted by Jim Oldham

Approved January 23, 2014